

# The INQUIRER

85p

voice of British and Irish Unitarians and Free Christians

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g up with young Unitarians







## Having fun, making friends and learning

Photos above then clockwise  
Unikids on a break in Swanage  
created a tribute to the singer Amy  
Winehouse. Photo by Liz Hills  
Junior Weekend participants at the  
trough in Great Hucklow.  
Inter Weekend participants cross  
the bridge to be welcomed into the  
Senior group.  
Group photo of the Senior Week-  
end in April.  
Doncaster Unitarians Alice,  
Rebekah and Hugh setting off on  
their 12km sponsored step walk at  
Derwent Dam in the Peak District.







National Youth Co-ordinator John Harley (in cap) with the Uni-kids at Swanage in 2010.

## YUP, catching up with young Unitarians

Youngsters all over the country are raising money, experiencing their faith and having fun. **John Harley** gives an overview.

### Fundraising

Congratulations to all the children, young people and adults who have thrown so much of their energy into fundraising for the Youth Department. The London to Brighton Bike Ride which took place on 11 June raised over £1250, the Unikids Sandcastle building event, which raised a few eyebrows on Swanage beach on 24 July, generated over £100 and the bike ride around Carsington Water by FDAers achieved a grand total of £649. Unitarian teenagers have also been fundraising in their local areas: Hugh and Alice Roberts and Rebekah Lyons from Doncaster Unitarian Church have raised an impressive £306 from a sponsored walk at Derwent dam, a garden party and a highly original 'Spudtastic' event. Jackie Roberts writes:

*'Spudtastic' coincided with the Harvest Service in October. Potato-linked events were offered e.g. 3D potato creations (Everything from Dr Who to a pig with a curly potato-peeling tail) and a 'Tatty trivia' quiz. (Did you know that instant mash potato flakes were used as fake snow for some movies?) The congregation were treated to a jacket-potato lunch cooked by the Doncaster Unitarian Young People and then they were all invited to create a mashed potato chalice image – a kind of*

*art attack!*

Some smashing ideas there! These fantastic efforts will enable the Youth Programme to improve and expand its work up and down the country. The Youth Programme greetings card has also been going global! So far we have generated over £100 profit. These cards, designed by two of our young people – Annabel Kramer and Joe Smith – are multi-purpose cards and so ideal to have a stack of them to use for any occasion. Packs of ten (priced at £4.95) are available from [www.yuponline.org.uk](http://www.yuponline.org.uk).

### Grants

A big thank you to The Wood Green Trust, the Manchester District Association and The Memorial Hall Trust for their generous grants during 2011-12. Their donations have helped the Youth Programme extend and develop our work.

### Youth Sunday

Have you got Youth Sunday – Sunday 29 January 2012 – in your diaries? The Youth Programme is encouraging congregations to create a child- or youth-friendly service on that particular Sunday. If you have children or teenagers in your community, you may like to ask them to conduct the worship. Or if you have no young people around, you are invited to dedicate the service to children of the world and donate some or all of the collection to the Youth Programme. To make this easier, our children, young people and youth leaders have crafted two worship packs: 'The Four Seasons'

*(Continued on next page)*



# The INQUIRER

THE UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN PAPER

Established 1842

The Inquirer is the oldest  
Nonconformist religious newspaper

**"To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."**

*From the Object passed at the  
General Assembly of the Unitarian and  
Free Christian Churches 2001*

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## Inquiring Words

Only when the child is able to identify its own centre with the centre of the universe does education really begin.

*Maria Montessori (1870 - 1952)*

## Youth Sunday in January

*(Continued from previous page)*

– worship for children and 'Identity, Self esteem and Love' – worship for teenagers. This material is suitable for intergenerational worship and can be changed or modified in any way to suit your needs. Of course the idea of creating just one Sunday service a year that may be attractive and engaging for children and teens is of limited value in our national challenge to make *all* our worship inspiring and relevant for people of *all* ages but we hope Youth Sunday will either complement the developments of this nature that are already occurring in your chapel, church or meeting house or help to kick start some new ideas. You may even prefer to use the Youth Sunday worship material on an alternative day to suit your requirements. Youth Sunday packs will be sent out to all secretaries in December. If you would like to request free copies please contact Audrey Longhurst at Essex Hall (e-mail, address and phone on left) or download in December from [www.unitarian.org.uk](http://www.unitarian.org.uk)

### Youth Voices

I am delighted to announce two new Youth Representatives who will be serving the Youth Panel: Bethan Branagh and Sarah Hall. They will be attending various Youth Panel meetings to express their views and the opinions of their peers and help make decisions about the Youth Programme. If any young person has a concern or issue they would like to have raised, they can contact Bethan or Sarah directly. (For their contact details, please get in touch with me.)

The recent Senior Weekend at Great Hucklow explored the theme 'Be the Change'. This will be an opportunity for seniors to learn more leadership skills and discuss ways ahead for young people to have a clearer system to articulate their views at Annual Meetings – and indeed have more say in deciding their profile across the whole Unitarian movement. A report will soon be made. Watch this space!

### Unikids questionnaire

Unikids is the name of the Unitarian youth programme for children in the South. Formerly called 'Blah', the initiative was started around 2002. Over the years we have run youth weekends at the Arethusa Venture Centre, Rochester, Alfriston Youth Hostel, near Lewes and Swanage Youth Hostel for the 7-14 age group.

We have also run family fun-days across the London District in locations including Hampstead, Croydon, Godalming and Brighton. The leaders have been Liz Hills, Peter Teets and John Harley. Our youth events have included activities like outdoor pursuits, creativity workshops, games, worship time and discussions.

We have decided to send out a questionnaire in order to find out about the needs of families around the London District in terms of youth work and events for children. The more questionnaires that are completed, the more the Youth Programme will learn about what kind of youth events are required. Please contact Audrey Longhurst at Essex Hall – [info@unitarian.org.uk](mailto:info@unitarian.org.uk) – or see address on page 2. Questionnaires can also be requested at [www.yuponline.org.uk](http://www.yuponline.org.uk)

*The Rev John Harley is youth coordinator of the General Assembly of  
Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.*



# *Junior Weekend was a trip back in time – only with better food*



*Junior weekend participants are kept busy all weekend.*

## **By Colin Partington**

In September, I attended my first Junior Weekend with my grandson William since my own children went nearly 30 years ago. But the weekend hasn't changed much. It was the same exciting drive there in anticipation of going to Great Hucklow, one of my favourite places in the world. There was the same warm welcome and gentle introduction to the weekend with some games in the Peach Hall.

It was the same joining in by the adults and getting down to being a child again. It was also the same in that there were no electronic gadgets – but there were none back then and now they are discouraged! Off to bed for the juniors and then a settle down in the lounge for an induction and chat amongst the adults.

Saturday was a day full of crafts interspersed with outside play in fabulous weather. All the children and the adults enjoyed the crafts, and not least making the chocolate-y things!



*The Spooky Party on Saturday night was a great success.*

Saturday Night was a Spooky Party with some very inventive costumes, followed by balloon modelling and more games. A tired bunch of juniors quietened down watching Mr Ben and then plodded to bed.

Sunday was more activities, the service at Chapel and the Horse Trough Initiation Ceremony for new juniors and new adults – including William and I!

What was different from 30 years ago was The Nightingale Unitarian Conference Centre. In many ways it has significantly improved – the beds, rooms, facilities and food. Terrific! I took an exhausted but very happy William back home to Barnard Castle. He is eager for the next one in March. (2-3 March 2012)

My lasting impression is of the warmth and welcoming nature of everyone involved in Junior Weekend – William will remember his exciting weekend and especially the other juniors and the friendships he has started.



*The youngsters made paper lanterns.*



*Some of the Junior Weekenders participated in worship at the Old Chapel, Great Hucklow.*



# Sun, fun and faith thrown in

## *'Leaders are the ham in our sandwich'*

*'An Idiot's Guide to FDA (Fun Days Away) written by FDAers. 8-12 August*

**Icebreakers and games.** We play icebreakers to get people warmed up and for fun.

**Workshops.** Our fantastic leaders each organise an individual workshop for all of us. Some are fun and jokey but others have really important messages for us to take away. The sessions teach us to be confident and honest. Every workshop is completely different and unique which is part of their enjoyment. They help everyone get to know each other better and we leave with smiles on our faces.

**The bike ride around Carsington Water.** Well, after getting lost and managing to take a hilly diversion, 7.5 miles in the wrong direction my friends and I turned around to make our way back to where we were meant to be. Though disheartened by this truly incredible incompetence on my behalf, we carried on to do one more 8.5 mile lap of the reservoir in torrential rain to achieve the goal and raise funds for the Youth Programme!

**Visionshare.** Where do leaders turn when they run out of ideas? To us, of course. Visionshare is a unique time giving any and all FDAers the chance to share their talent or passion with the group. In the past we've had a range of activities, from speaking Welsh, learning Karate and talks about charities. This year we had a drama workshop and a demonstration of drills from Sea Cadets.

**Guardian Angels.** At FDA we're like a big family – everyone looks out for everyone else. Have you ever wanted your own guardian angel? Someone to look out for you and make sure you're OK? Well at FDA you have your own guardian angel except that you don't know who they are. You can always guarantee they'll always put a smile on your face!

**Food.** I remember back in the days of 2007 when the food at Hucklow was stew and bread and only water for drink (Joke!). There's a funny thing with the food at Hucklow – you get cake after every lunch and dinner – absolutely fantastic chocolate cake, creamy cheesecake, sweet cupcakes etc. But it's hard to eat cake when you have a slight food-baby coming on because of the main meal. Meaty lasagne, stringy cheesy veggie-looking things. Tender chicken surrounded by roast potatoes. The chef's name is Shaun and yes you do start to wonder if you can fit him in your suitcase and take him home.

**Circle time** is a time to reflect and allow people to relax, forget, remember or burn away their problems and worries. Each Credo group picks an evening to take Circle time and creates a special time using meditations, readings, music, fire and other resources. The most popular Circle time is to have a bonfire and toast marshmallows.

**Credo groups.** This is where the leaders find out we're doing OK and we chat about the various aspects of the day, whether you find them good or bad. It's usually good fun. Usually the group consists of about five people roughly of your own age. It's also a good way to vent.

**Youth Leaders.** The leaders are in charge but they are not your usual bossy, shouting leaders – they are your friends as well. You can talk to them about anything and they make everything fun and they give us opportunities. It's just like a big family in Hucklow including the leaders. They make everything and everybody stick together. They're like the ham



*Participants in 'Fun Days Away' enjoyed summer days in the Peak District. Photo by Emma Lowe*

between the pieces of bread that makes up the sandwich. The leaders are amazing.

**Showtime**, more often than not, is full of cheesiness and a sense of failing attention, with one or two acts that are genuinely very good or moving or make your jaw ache from laughing too much.

*FDA-ers are participants in the annual summer break – 'Fun Days Away' – held at the Nightingale Unitarian Conference Centre at Great Hucklow.*

## *FDA - in their own words*

After looking at some famous strap lines that advertise products such as 'Keep it with Kodak', 'I'm Lovin' it', 'Because I'm worth it' and 'Try something new today' FDAers were asked to create a strap line or statement that said something about themselves. Here's what they came up with:

- Anything goes
- Bubbly and gorgeous
- I am a shining light
- Bursting with berry-ness
- I'm me – deal with it
- Don't underestimate me!
- I am human!
- Keep smiling
- Believe in me!
- Flesh is for zombies
- I am who I am!!
- Dreams can come true
- Smiling is the best medicine
- Where words fail, music speaks
- I am a fun, loving people person
- My face is just a very handsome tip to a big iceberg
- Grab life by the horns
- If you wanna do it just do it – you only live once
- I am nobody else
- Be what you want, not what they want



# summer youth programmes

## *'We each had the chance to share'*

**Unikids 22<sup>nd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

For the second year running Unikids assembled at Swanage Youth Hostel for a summer holiday. The theme this year was 'The Sky's the Limit' – this involved a sponsored sandcastle-building event to raise funds for the Youth Programme. After two and a half hours of sweat and toil our castle measured an impressive 1.87 metres – even taller than Peter Teets. It looked like a huge formless anthill so we made it into a 'sandman', complete with a moustache, scruffy hair and union jack garnish. Thank you to all the Unikids who demonstrated brilliant team work and creativity. Later in the week we heard the shocking news of the talented soul singer Amy Winehouse's death and so we all made a sand sculpture of Amy. Many tourists in Swanage came to see our temporary and fragile memorial. Below you will find accounts of the holiday written by the children and one leader. Many thanks to our dedicated leaders: Liz Hills and Peter Teets.

*– John Harley*

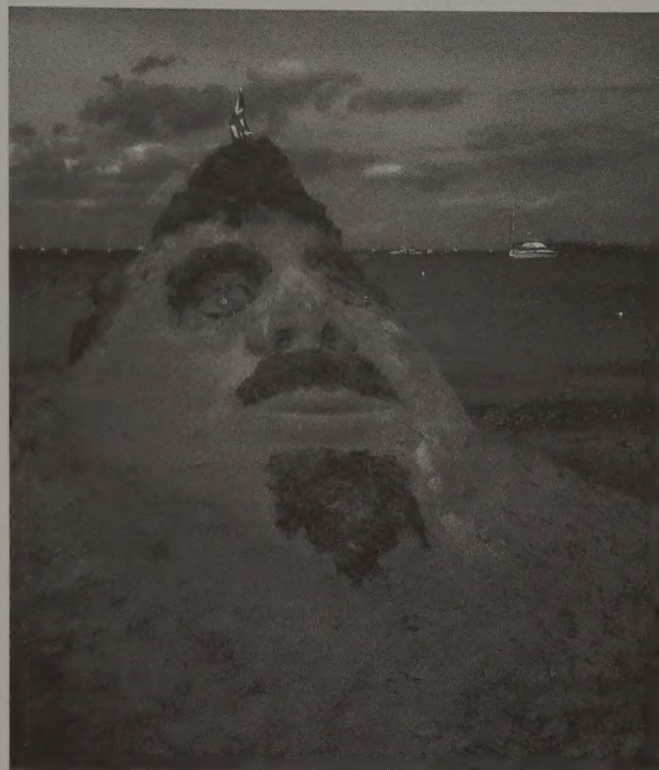
We had a massive laugh playing fun games on the beach. We played Cat and Mouse and Duck, Duck, Duck, Goose. It was fun to run in the sand and everyone got tired out so we went straight to bed afterwards.

*– Lizzie*

On Saturday we went on a treasure hunt around Corfe Castle. It was quite difficult but it was fun testing our knowledge compared to our leaders!

*– Claire*

On Saturday evening we found ourselves on the beach again, braving the elements and challenging our creative and spiritual selves. We created animals out of whatever materials



*Unikids participants built a 1.87-metre 'Sandman' sand castle. Photo by Liz Hills*

we could find: believe me, with rocks, seaweed, driftwood and rubbish it's surprisingly hard.

*– Annabel*

On Sunday we visited the small island called Brownsea Island. Basically it's a nature reserve and supposedly the rare species of red squirrel live there. However, when the Unikids visited the animals decided not to come out.

*– Lily*

I really enjoyed swimming in the sea at Swanage. Although the sea wasn't that warm I still got right in. I did that by running straight in and not going in slowly (we call it the 'John'). I had lots of fun.

*– Danny*

On Sunday we went to the best activity of the holiday: Splashdown. There were long slides that stretch for miles. It was filled from inside and out. I loved every single ride especially 'The Tennessee Twister.' I wish I could go every day.

*– Catherine*

Every night we have Circle, or as Unikids call it, 'Rectangle Time'. Every night we sat down with hot chocolate and biscuits and talked about our day. We each had the chance to share our highlights of the day and say how we were feeling. It's a time to have some quiet time and to support each other. There were lots of funny stories to tell.

*– Bethan*

On Monday we went to Kimmeridge Bay and saw many magnificent fossils – in addition to our three leaders. The best fossil was an enormous ammonite that was bigger than Lizzie's foot.

*– Peter – leader*

### **Junior Weekend Team on the road**

The Junior Weekend team have been travelling again; we have been out and about to spread the word about the excellent work of the national youth programme.

Over the past few years we've been to several locations across the UK. Our most recent visit was in July, when we went on a long trip to The Octagon, Norwich, and took a snippet of what happens on the weekend. We started with making of name badges and welcome games. This was followed by two craft sessions – making bookmarks and decorating cakes, which those attending could then take home with them. And of course there was Tuck Shop time. The day was finished with more games.

Eight children came along for the fun day. The team were made very welcome and the day was fun-filled and memorable. Following this event we saw some new faces at Octobers Junior Weekend, which is fantastic.

If you'd like the Youth Roadshow to come visit your area please contact us:

**juniorweekend@hotmail.com**

*– Sue Talbot*



# Giving children a place of their own

Fulwood Old Chapel adopted the name 'Uni-kids' from the national programme. **Susie Ince** tells how the congregation established a special place for the children there.

From a stable in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to a spider-infested store room in the 20<sup>th</sup>. Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has become a hide away for Fulwood Old Chapel, (Sheffield), Uni-Kids – a place which they call their own and do their own thing (thanks to the sound proofing and IKEA storage!).

This has all been a dream come true for Uni-Kids leader, Brian Holmshaw, who has, for some time, been wanting to give the children who go to Fulwood a more modern identity.

"Junior Chapel sounded so stuffy", he explains, "And having to keep the little ones quiet whilst the service was going on in the adjoining chapel used to be a nightmare. Now they can be as happy and as vocal as they want without any worries!". The name is from a similar Unitarian scheme in the south of England. "It was just too good a name to miss" he says. "I hope they don't mind me using it!".

There is the added advantage for Brian of having lots of storage for paints and glues and papers and all things glittery plus their own notice board to show off their handy work!

During the winter the children worked hard on a mural depicting a jungle scene on one of the walls – the little ones painting the small animals at the bottom and the older ones painting the giraffe and the elephant at the top. A bit messy but great fun and being able to close the door from the more, shall we say, 'discerning' eye whilst the painting was in progress was an added bonus!

But not content with this, Brian also has had his eye on a spot of waste land in the chapel grounds. It was only a pocket handkerchief piece of land – no good for anyone – but Brian thought otherwise. And so when the sun has been out, Fulwood Uni-Kids have been out with their spades and forks digging away removing all the weeds and bits of stone and rubble. They then planted seeds in little pots, and watched them grow in their newly acquired tiny greenhouse until they were big enough to plant in the garden. Uni-Kids efforts were rewarded by the sampling of their first strawberries. Thumbs up from



*Working in the Uni-kids garden at Fulwood Old Chapel. The first harvest of strawberries got a thumbs-up all around. Photo by Rod Cumming*

everyone!

This has been a great morale booster for the kids who now feel that they have a real place to come to on a Sunday morning. John Harley, GA youth officer, added his thoughts, 'I had the pleasure of visiting Fulwood Chapel in January and I was given a guided tour by Brian of the Junior Chapel jungle-themed hideaway. It's an inspiring little den and I wonder if any of the adults will want to escape there during any particularly long sermons! One thing that struck me was the way people of all ages worked on this project together – little ones, older ones and the even older ones – I do think this is such a winning way of encouraging ownership and participation. I wonder if this is a vision that can be emulated up and down the country – giving children and young people a special space they can completely make their own. I know that space is at a premium in many of our congregations but the extraordinary thing about this jungle paradise is its size – it really is small – its magic is that it is personalised and set aside from all the other rooms used by adults. It is encouraging to see the Unikids 'brand' (the name of youth activities for young Unitarians in the South) spreading North! I wish Uni-Kids in Fulwood every success in their exotic project.'

For more information go to [www.fulwood-old-chapel.org.uk](http://www.fulwood-old-chapel.org.uk) or email Brian on: [uni-kids@fulwood-old-chapel.org.uk](mailto:uni-kids@fulwood-old-chapel.org.uk)



*A portion of the mural painted by the children at Fulwood Old Chapel. Photo by Rod Cumming*

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**Inquirer: Faith in Words**



# Making a difference in children's lives

By Peter Hewis

The trustees of the Send a Child to Hucklow Fund met at Great Hucklow on Saturday 5 November 2011 for their Annual General Meeting. All of the arrangements for the holidays are managed from this single meeting each year. Reports at the meeting showed, once again, how valuable the holidays are for 'children in need'. As ever the children's own comments were often enlightening: *"The food was great.....We can have second helpings.....We have our own beds.....Can we stay here forever?.....Do we have to go home?.....Look at all the green fields and hills.....I love Hucklow."*

The Fund provided eleven holidays in 2011. Children came from Bolton, Mansfield, Nottingham, Manchester, Birmingham, Wigan and Liverpool (five groups). Income from direct giving was £28,762. Interest, dividends and reclaimed income tax brought in a further £8372. Other particularly generous donations came from AER Goulty's Charity, the Joseph & Ann Slater Memorial Fund, the Dagny Raymond Charitable Trust, the James Henry Blake Charity plus the Freemasons of Sutton and Mansfield. We received a legacy of £500 from the estate of Sir Cyril Smith and gifts totalling £897 in memory of Anne Harris, Trevor Jones, Philip Overbury, Maurice Pocock and Henry Poynton. The birthday of Celia Cartwright brought donations as did the sale of CDs of music by Trevor Jones compiled by John Hewerdine.

Gifts can now be made very easily via our website:

[www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk](http://www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk) and through our Virgin



Volunteers help send out this year's SACH appeal.

Money Giving account.

Expenditure totalled £62,904 of which £59,433 was spent on the children's holidays and £3123 on administration and publicity. Expenses were higher this year in preparation for our major appeal for 2012. Our main appeal leaflet has been paid for through the generosity of Andrew's Coaches who have served us well through three generations and over the whole 50 years.

Your generosity has made a real difference to the life of many children and your support for the 2012 holidays will be deeply appreciated.

*The Rev Peter Hewis is a trustee of the Send-a-Child-to-Hucklow Fund.*

## The Send-a-Child-to-Hucklow Fund

*There were eleven holidays in 2011. The children's descriptions of what the holidays meant to them are deeply moving.*

***Thank you for helping to make these holiday possible.***

***Please help us to continue giving needy children a country holiday.***

Your gifts in 2010/2011 amounted to the excellent sum of £28,762

Very, very many thanks.

Your gifts for the 2012 holidays will be as deeply appreciated as ever. **Our target for the 50th Anniversary Year is £50,000 for direct donations. This year your gifts will be DOUBLED by a generous Trust up to a maximum of £50,000. It costs approximately £250 per child and we hope to send two hundred children in 2011.**

Gifts will be gratefully received by the Hon. Assistant Treasurer, Rev. Chris Goacher, 19 De Montfort Road, Hinckley, Leics., LE10 1LQ. Please note that the Fund can reclaim income tax paid by any individual (as long as s/he has paid income tax) if a Gift Aid Donation form has been signed. This is now a vital part of the fund's income. Please help in this way if you can. A copy of this form will be inserted in a December issue of *The Inquirer*, or may be obtained from Mr. Goacher. Giving with a Gift Aid Donation form makes a gift of £20 worth £25 to the Fund. Gifts may now be made very easily on line by going to our website: [www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk](http://www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk)

The Fund is a registered charity number 271585. All gifts are used for the holidays except for gifts in memory of someone that are put into a Capital Account and the interest is used for holidays. Please remember the Fund in your will. Legacies are a much appreciated and valuable income. Copies of the report and appeal may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary Rev Ernest Baker, 145 Tullibardine Road, Sheffield, South Yorks., S11 7GN Telephone 0114 266 1070.



# Letters to the Editor

## Many sides to 'Occupied London'

To the Editor:

Re Occupied London

The front page, editorial and article in 29 October *Inquirer* portrays a polarised picture of 'us' and 'them'. Unitarians have a small number of adherents relative to expenditure on buildings, salaries and stipends, which implies substantial investment income. Is most of this derived directly or indirectly via the stock exchange – and if so is this an example of 'corporate greed'?

**James Easthope**

Westfield, East Sussex

## CCJ not the only interfaith path

To the Editor:

Re Derek McAuley's article in the 29 October *Inquirer* on the Council of Christians and Jews

My Jewish friend and I met through our commitment to peace through justice in Palestine and Israel. In the process, we have each reconnected with our faith traditions, she by joining the Reform Synagogue and helping to uncouple Judaism from Zionism and me through Unitarianism and Sabeel <http://www.sabeel.org/> (ecumenical liberation theology).

Recently we continued our ongoing and lively discussion about how the Jewish roots of Christianity inform both faiths. My friend also shared with me an insightful recent address she had recently given at the Synagogue. She had rehabilitated a 'difficult' passage in the Book of Numbers which, when taken literally, appears to be hopelessly sexist and is thus often disregarded by liberal Jews. By applying modern psychology to the passage she was able to help her congregation (and me) to recognise its inner truths.

I commend this kind of interfaith dialogue to my fellow Unitarians as a genuine alternative to wasting their time and energies on Zionist front groups such as the Council of Christians and Jews.

**Miriam Walton**

Shrewsbury

## EC should offer more information

To the Editor:

We have learnt very little about the new

arrangements under the new Strategic Groups other than their names. It is now more than a month from the end of September, when the governance changed from five Commissions to three Strategic Groups, and what have we been told so far – just the names of the Chairpersons and that the Visibility Group will be reporting in February 2012.

There has been no formal information about which parts of the old Commissions are to be included in the new Groups; it would be nice to be told officially that the young people's section is to be looked after by the Executive Committee itself, and that Karen Hanley, ex-chair of the Faith and Public Issues Commission has been given permission to continue being our representative on Radar. This is a group which looks ahead at all future Government legislation, its potential effect on faith groups, and often looks at the unintended consequences on vulnerable groups who may not be able to speak out for themselves.

(I am personally concerned about the future for Faith and Public Issues, which is our window on the national scene).

The Executive Committee informed us of the changes at the Annual Meetings in April; that's six months ago; there must be volunteers who are still waiting to hear whether they are still needed. I understand that past members of old Commissions have been thanked by the Chief Officer, Derek McAuley.

**Rosemary Ruston**

Watford

## Unitarians must promulgate truth

To the Editor:

In *The Inquirer* of 15 October the Rev John Wilkinson agreed that Unitarians should avoid cutting themselves off from other Christians, but added that Unitarians 'have a responsibility to promulgate the truth they see' and should invite liberal thinkers in other churches to join us. What a pleasure it was to be reminded of that important point.

John himself has become a Unitarian because his considerable biblical study has shown him that the Doctrine of the Fall is unbiblical. The story in Genesis is really a myth about a rise into wisdom and knowledge. In 1945 the

Unitarian book 'A Free Religious Faith' referred to the Eden myth as an account of a process 'out of which have arisen all the distinctive achievements and possibilities of human life'.

Julian Smith's reply to John (*The Inquirer* 29 October) complains

of John's use of the word manic to describe Augustine's theology.

However, Augustine of Hippo was a Manichaeist before he joined the Christian church and is believed to be responsible for its syncretism.

Julian Smith's letter says 'every GCSE Religious Studies student knows that it is not possible to follow Jesus without reference to the teaching of the Church.' The idea that a person cannot read the Bible for him/herself is pre-Reformation. In any case, the GCSE curriculum is largely determined by the Church, especially the Anglo/Roman Catholic Church – 'so they would say that, wouldn't they?' Anyone can see that the doctrine of original sin is not in the Old Testament – otherwise the Jews would have the same doctrine. John was quite right to point out how oppressive this doctrine has been.

I hope that Unitarians new and old will stand up for what they believe.

Accepting these beliefs would not just be moving closer to orthodox Christians, it would mean denying our Unitarianism.

**Peter Godfrey**

King's Stanley, Glos.

## Inquirer letters policy

Letters should be succinct. It is preferable that they are sent by email to [inquirer@btinternet.com](mailto:inquirer@btinternet.com). Typewritten or legible handwritten submissions may be sent to the editor at 46A Newmarket Road, Cringleford, Norwich NR4 6UF.

Letters should be signed with the writer's full name and, if applicable, the name of the group or congregation with which the writer is affiliated. A postal address and telephone number are required, for verification purposes. Letters will be edited for length and content and may appear in an excerpted form. Any affiliations listed with letter writers' names are for identification purposes only, and should not suggest the view expressed is representative of that body.



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We are delighted to be arranging the Insurances for the General Assembly and Essex Hall. We had a wonderful time at the General Assembly Meetings in Swansea in April and have since visited many of the people we met. Significant savings in premium have been achieved where the Insurances were not arranged with an appropriate Insurer or the present cover was on the wrong basis. We are now looking after more than 60 Unitarian Churches and fellowships, and also the Nightingale Centre.

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# News in brief

## Sit back and enjoy the apocalypse

Most Unitarians may not get into apocalyptic theology – as some other faiths do – but a new book is out which still might appeal to Unitarians. It begins:

*Dear fellow mortal,*

*Imagine that you're sitting on your sofa leafing through 'The Coffee Table Book of Doom', when you feel an odd vibration. Ripples start to shiver across the surface of your teacup.*

*Puzzled, you strain your ears. Then you hear a distant rumbling sound. The noise grows louder. And nearer. The sound is unfamiliar at first, but then you realise what it is. Hoofbeats.*

*Don't go to the window and peer through the curtains. Don't tempt the horsemen of the Apocalypse by showing your face. Doom is no longer far off in the distant future. It could arrive as early as Tuesday morning. There's nothing you can do except read on...*

*Yours anxiously,*

*Art Lester (Unitarian minister at Croydon) and Steven Appleby*

Remember the good old days, when doom was straightforward? When all we had to worry about were those 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse from the Bible: Pestilence, War, Famine and Death? Well now we have reason to believe that there are more than 4 horsemen. Many more. At the last count, Art and Steven Appleby, the authors of *The Coffee Table Book of Doom*, put the estimate at 27 horsemen. And that's not all. According to the ancient prophesies of the Mayan Calendar, our next date with doom is due on 31 December 2012... The book is funny and serious at the same time – something they thought couldn't be done. It can't guarantee saving you from all the perils of 2012, but the authors promise to make it more fun.

Random House says, '*The Coffee Table Book of Doom* is a brilliantly funny yet erudite compendium of all the 27 doom-laden horsemen we need to worry about – personal doom, gender erosion, asteroid impact, pandemics, super storms, sexual ruin – and much more besides. '*The Coffee Table Book of Doom*' is available on Amazon at: <http://amzn.to/u2eAr4> ISBN-10: 0224086952. For another helping of doom, see the authors' blog at: <http://bit.ly/sZsMg6>

## Inaugural Channing lecture held

The inaugural Channing Lecture was delivered on 22 October at Golders Green Unitarians by the Unitarian historian and former Unitarian General Assembly President Alan Ruston. 'What is a Unitarian?' is a question often asked but in belief terms it's difficult to answer because the variations are so large. Alan argued that it was better to ask 'What is being a Unitarian?' and took examples from the last 150 years of people who made this affirmation and sought to live out their vision.

He started with J Estlin Carpenter, who in the 1860s at the age of 20 had an experience of God which inspired him



all his life and led him among other things to become an internationally recognised expert on world religions. Then there was Robert Spears, who, intoxicated with his variety of Unitarianism, sought to spread his faith everywhere. In the 20th Century there were, among others, Margaret Barr, who dedicated her life to the service of Unitarianism in India, and Dudley Cave, a former prisoner of the Japanese in the Second World War, who found it possible decades later to reach out the hand of friendship to his captors when few others were willing to do so.

Each expressed something of what being a Unitarian means. Alan thought that this rested on three qualities: standing out for what they felt was right and acting on it; constantly asking questions and not being afraid to proclaim their Unitarianism to anyone. Perhaps, as Ben Downing, a former editor of *The Inquirer*, pointed out, 'Unitarians are neither harmonious nor homogeneous'. Expressing these attributes did not always make these people easy to get along with. However, could living out these qualities today make each of us positive exemplars of Unitarianism in our own time?

Cheques for a total of £303 for the Unitarian General Assembly were handed over to Chief Officer Derek McAuley and the GA President Ann Peart and a further £200 was given on the night. Because the £503 donated was live giving this means that it will be doubled by the Bowland Trust.

— Feargus O'Connor



(l-r) Unitarian Chief Officer Derek McAuley, GA president Ann Peart and Alan Ruston at the Channing Lecture

## Unitarian artist mixes art and religion

Unitarian artist Anthony Padgett has been selected to show a piece of work 'The Prophet of Postmodern Religious Art' at the Three Faiths Forum (3FF) art exhibition 'Urban Dialogues'.

The exhibit is the result of 3FF's Urban Dialogues project, which encourages artists of different faiths and beliefs to collaborate together, using art as a vehicle to create closer cooperation between communities. It is at the Red Gallery, 3 Rivington Street, London, EC2A 3DT. Anthony's painting (right) is also on the cover his book *World Religion and Modern Art* ISBN: 978-0-9561587-9-6 For more information see his web site at: [anthonydpadgett.tripod.com/](http://anthonydpadgett.tripod.com/)

